

My name is Breanna Bushman and I work at Children's Hospital here in Saint Paul. I am here to provide you with the face of a bedside nurse who has seen firsthand the effects from the lack of mental health services these children have.

The need for better mental health services has taken such a toll on the services Children's Hospital offers to the community. We are seeing more and more children in the Emergency Department waiting room because of the lack of bed space in the ER due to the number of kids waiting for placement who are taking up those beds. For example, just last week, in our 30 bed ER, we had 13 kids with mental health diagnosis awaiting placement. That's almost half of the ER stripped of their ability to provide care for children twh come to us with emergent needs. That's 13 nursing assistance we have to pull from other parts of the hospital to sit with these children in the ER.

We are at the point now where we can either treat kids that come in the ER in our resuscitation rooms utilized for CPR or traumas, or have them sit in the waiting room for around 4 hours. This means they do not receive the full scope of services they need as urgently as they could if they were receiving care in the correct care setting. The lack of appropriate services and a mental health system that is equipped to support children leads to children experiencing much more complex and challenging mental health needs then if they were able to receive intervention services sooner.

We have medically complex children waiting in our waiting room who need access to intensive care and treatment. With our extremely limited bed space in the ER and Children's St. Paul's plan to consolidate the PICU, these children are receiving inadequate care that could easily be remedied. With hospitals making decisions to remove vital services, we need to ensure appropriate options are available. This mental health bill will not only provide services to mental health patients but will open up the ER to care for the medically complex kids appropriately and free up nursing assistants who can now help throughout the hospital instead of just the emergency department.

I urge you to support HF 1198 to ensure children can receive vital mental health supports that will allow them to be healthy and successful in their lives and to help reduce the burden on our already short-staffed hospitals to care for these children who should be receiving care in other, more appropriate, settings.